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Why Crime Does Not Pay—



Sophie Lyons.

**Surprising Methods of
the Thieves Who Work
Only During Business
Hours and Walk Away
with Thousands of
Dollars Under the Very
Eyes of Bank Officials**

Written by SOPHIE LYONS

**The Most Famous and Successful Criminal of Modern Times,
Who Made a Million Dollars in Her Early Criminal Career
and Lost It at Monte Carlo, and Has Now Accumulated
Half a Million Dollars in Honorable Business Enterprises.**

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One day before I was as well known to the police as I later became I was walking down Broadway in New York when I met a prominent citizen of the underworld with whom I had been associated in numerous burglaries. So far as I knew at that time, he was still a burglar. After we had stood chatting for several minutes I was surprised to have him press a hundred dollar bill into my hand and say:

"Just as the clock strikes noon to-day I want you to go into the Manhattan Bank and have this bill changed. Walk right up to the paying teller's window and ask for some silver and small bills. When he hands you the money, take your time about counting it, and keep his attention engaged just as long as you can."

"But what do I get for running errands for you?" I jokingly inquired.
He refused to explain any further, and as I was just dying with curiosity to find out what sort of game he was up to, I agreed to do as I was told. Of course, I knew it was some crime he was inveigling me into, but just what it was or what part I was playing in it I had no more idea than a babe unborn when I strolled into the bank promptly on the stroke of twelve.

The paying teller proved to be a very susceptible man, and I found no difficulty in getting him into conversation. As there were few people in the bank at that hour, he was glad enough to relieve the monotony of his day's work by a little chat with a pretty young woman.

Well, to make a long story short, we talked busily for fully fifteen minutes, and during all that time I succeeded in keeping his eyes riveted on me. When at last a man approached the window to transact some business I put my money away in my satchel, gave the courteous teller a parting smile and strolled leisurely out of the bank. While I was in the bank I had seen nothing of the man who had sent me on this mysterious errand, and I did not see him until I called at his hotel that evening.

"We've done a good day's work, Sophie, and here is your share of the profits," he said, handing me a fatter roll of crisp bank notes than I had laid my hands on for several weeks. As I hurriedly counted the bills over I was amazed to find that the roll contained \$2,000.

"While you were flirting so deliciously with the paying teller," my friend explained, "I slipped into the bank by a side entrance, reached my hand through a gate in the wire cage and grabbed a bundle of bills, which I later found to contain \$4,000."

That was my introduction to the work of the "bank sneak"—a thief whose methods were then in their infancy, but who developed ingenuity and boldness so rapidly that he soon became the terror of the banks, and every business man who ever has to handle large sums of money or securities.

What I have to tell you today about "bank sneaks" and their methods will furnish as good an example as anything I know of the fact that CRIME DOES NOT PAY.

The stealings of a clever "sneak" often run as high as \$100,000 in a single year. But what benefit does he get out of this easily acquired wealth? It invariably goes as easily as it comes, and after a few months he is as badly in need of money as he was before. I can count on the fingers of one hand the "sneaks" who are getting any real happiness out of life—and they are all men and women who, like myself, have seen the error of their ways and reformed.

If crime could ever prove profitable to any man, it would have proved so to Walter Sheridan, long the foremost "bank sneak" in America. So varied and far-reaching were his adroit schemes that within twenty years the gangs which he organized and led stole more than a million dollars. He was a past master in the art of escaping punishment for his crimes, and he was also a shrewd, close-fisted financier, who claimed the lion's share of all the booty and carefully hoarded his savings.

Yet what did all his cleverness avail this prince of "sneaks"? His fortune was

swept away, and he finally died a pauper in the prison cell, to which he was sent when he was picked up starving in the streets of Montreal.

Sheridan introduced many ingenious new methods in "bank sneaking" just as Mark Shimburn did in burglary. He was the first to conceal a pair of tweezers in the end of his cane and use them to pick up bundles of money which were beyond the reach of his arms.

This cane was a really wonderful device. To all appearances it was only a fine straight piece of bamboo, nicely polished and fitted with an ivory handle—the sort of walking stick any prosperous man might carry.

Only when you unscrewed its heavy brass ferrule was the dishonest purpose for which it was intended revealed. The bamboo stick was hollow, and in it were two narrow strips of steel which dropped down below the end of the cane and could be operated like tweezers when you released the spring, which was concealed under a heavy band of solid silver just below the handle.

When Sheridan was his natural self he was a stout, good looking man of dignified presence and refined manners who would readily pass for a well-to-do merchant or manufacturer. But when occasion required he could change his appearance so that even his closest friends wouldn't recognize him.

Once when he was arrested in New York he effected in his cell in the Tombs a transformation which mystified the authorities and nearly resulted in his release on the ground of mistaken identity.

He exchanged his expensively tailored suit and fine linen for the dirty rags of a tramp who was locked up in the adjoining cell. With a broken knife blade he hacked off every bit of his long flowing beard. He dyed his reddish brown hair with coffee grounds and clipped and twisted it to make it look a life-long stranger to comb and brush. By eating soap he managed to reduce his portly figure to a thin, sickly shadow of skin and bones.

When the prison keepers came to take him into court for trial they were amazed to find in place of the well-dressed, well-fed broker they had locked up a few days before a repulsively dirty, ragged, emaciated tramp whose actions indicated that he was not more than half-witted.

This ruse of Sheridan's failed, however, through the persistence of William A. Pinkerton, head of the Pinkerton Detective Agency. Mr. Pinkerton, who had been on Sheridan's trail for years, identified him positively in spite of his changed appearance, and succeeded in having him convicted and sentenced to five years in Sing Sing prison.

It was from this wizard of crime, Walter

Sheridan, that I learned the value of the clever disguise which so often stood me in good stead and which enabled my comrades and me to get our hands on hundreds of thousands of dollars that didn't belong to us.

Early in my career I conceived the idea of furthering my dishonest plans by posing as a wealthy old widow, so crippled that she had to transact whatever business she had with the bank from her seat in her carriage. This plan succeeded beyond my fondest expectations, and I am ashamed to think how many thousands of dollars I stole through this simple but extremely effective little expedient.

This ruse proved its merits the first time we tried it. In the daylight robbery of a Brooklyn, New York, bank, where one of my two companions walked away with \$40,000 while I sat outside in my carriage listening to the old cashier's advice about investing the money my lamented husband had left me.

But let me go back to the very beginning and show you just how this bold robbery was planned and carried out. We had had our eyes on this bank for a week—Johnny Meany, Tom Bigelow and I. Between the hours of 12 and 1 each day we found there were few customers in the bank and the institution was left in charge of the old cashier and a young bookkeeper.

But the cashier, although over sixty years old, was a keen-eyed, nervous man, whose suspicions were apt to be easily aroused. And besides the window in the bank's customers were so situated that he could always see out of the corner of his eye the vault and the long counter where the money was piled.

We all agreed that it was not safe to attempt the robbery while the cashier was in his usual place. If I could only devise some way of getting him outside the bank for a few minutes it would be easy for one of the men to hold the young bookkeeper in conversation at the paying teller's window which was so placed that while he stood there his back was toward the vault. That would give me the opportunity we needed for the third member of the party to step unnoticed through a convenient side door and get the plunder.

But how to lure the cashier out of the bank? That was the question, and it was while I was racking my brains for some solution of the difficulty that I blundered upon the idea of posing as a wealthy widow who was to leave her carriage when she called at the bank.

During my stay in this city I had heard of the death in Europe of a rich and prominent Brooklyn man. He had been living abroad for the last ten years and had married there an English woman who had never visited Brooklyn and was entirely unknown there except by name.

Nothing could have suited my purpose better. I would pose as this wealthy Brooklyn man's widow, and in this guise would induce the bank cashier to come out to my carriage and talk with me.

You may be sure that I laid my plans with the greatest care, for I knew what a bold undertaking this was and that the least oversight on my part would spoil everything.

First I bought a silver gray wig to cover my chestnut hair. It was a beautiful specimen of the wigmaker's art and cost me sixty-five dollars.

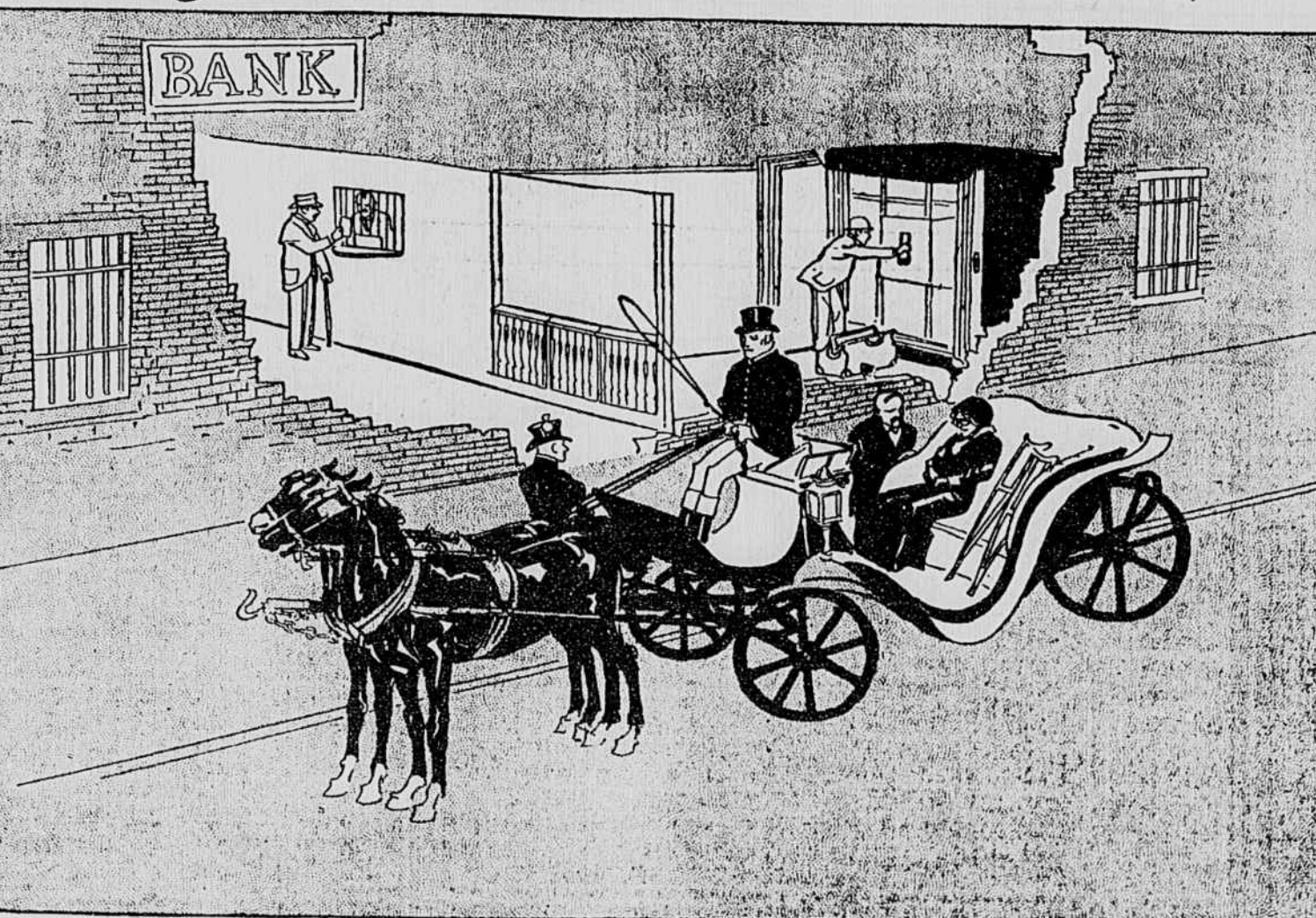
Then I made up my plump, rosy cheeks to look as pale and wrinkled as an invalid woman's should at the age of seventy and dressed myself in the gloomiest, most expensive widow's weeds I could find.

A pair of hideous blue goggles and two crutches completed my disguise. The goggles were to hide my bright eyes whose habit of roaming incessantly from side to side I had an idea often made people suspicious of me; and the crutches were to bear out my story of the paralyzed limbs which made my leaving my carriage except when absolutely necessary out of the question.

My costume was not the only detail which had to be arranged to make my plan complete. I must have some visiting cards—cards with a heavy mourning border and the name of the Brooklyn man's widow engraved on them.

I also didn't forget to place with these cards in my handbag some worthless mining stock which had been my share of a western bank robbery, and which even Ellen Peck's shrewd magic couldn't turn into cash. This would be useful, I thought, in holding the old cashier's attention.

Then there were my horses and a carriage befitting my wealth which the men hired from a livery stable. I called on two young thieves whom I knew over in New York, and by promising them a small



"Posing as a wealthy, crippled old widow, I would induce the cashier to leave the bank and come out to my carriage to advise me about some investments. In the meantime, one of my companions held the attention of the sole remaining man in the bank, while the third member of the party crept in at a side entrance and filled his satchel with bundles of cash and securities."

percentage of whatever we succeeded in stealing induced them to dress up in some borrowed livery and act as my driver and footman.

At last everything was arranged and the day was set for the robbery. The morning dawned warm and bright—just the sort of weather which would make an invalid widow feel like venturing out to transact a little business.

I had not seen Bigelow and Meany since the night before. They had called then at my rooms to go over our plans for the last time. Bigelow was to engage the attention of the bookkeeper who would be left alone in the bank after the cashier's departure while wiry little Johnny Meany made his way through the side door and got the money.

At a few minutes past twelve my carriage drew up in front of the bank. Two or three of the officials were just going to lunch. If nothing unexpected had happened to change the bank's routine the cashier and one bookkeeper were alone in the counting room and the coast was clear.

Through my blue foggy glasses I could see Tom Bigelow's big form swinging down the street as unconcerned as if he had not a care in the world. And from the opposite direction, although I could not see him, I felt positive that Meany was on his way to carry out his part in our crime.

The footman jumped down and stood at attention while I fumbled in my bag for one of my black bordered cards. With hands which trembled naturally enough to give the last touch of reality to my feeble appearance I handed him the card and tremulously whispered my instructions. He bowed respectfully and disappeared inside the bank.

Would the cashier be good enough to step outside and discuss a little matter of business with a lady who was unable to leave her carriage?

The cashier is very sorry but he is extremely busy and, as he is practically alone in the bank just now, it will be impossible

for him to leave his desk. Can't the lady arrange to step inside for a minute?

Before the nervous footman has time to explain that the lady is a cripple and cannot leave her carriage, the cashier has taken another look at the card, has recognized the name and realizes that it is the widow of a millionaire who is waiting outside for an audience with him.

"Oh, beg your pardon," he says nervously. "The light is so poor here that I could hardly see that name. Tell the lady that I will be out directly."

As the footman walks out to report to his mistress that her wishes are going to be fulfilled, the cashier hurriedly changes the linen jacket he wears at his desk for a solemn frock coat, gives his scanty hair a quick part and calls to the bookkeeper to look out for things while he is gone.

All this time I am sitting primly there in the carriage lying as hard as I know how to live up to the dignity of a millionaire's widow and to conceal my fears that something is going to happen to disarrange our carefully laid plans.

But, the next instant, I am relieved to see the cashier coming toward me all bows and smiles. And as he comes out of the bank he almost brushes elbows with Tom Bigelow who, with a punctuality worthy of a better cause, is going into the bank at that very moment.

Yes, indeed, the cashier remembers my husband and he is proud of the opportunity to be of some service to his widow. I can see the avarice shining in his eyes as he thinks of the profits his bank will make if he can get the handling of my property.

Our interview is, of course, a tedious affair for I am very feeble and have all sorts of difficulty in finding the mining stock about which I want to consult him. But the cashier shows not the slightest impatience and humors my whims with all the consideration my wealth and position deserve.

And when he sees what a worthless lot

of stock I have invested in, his interest in me becomes all the greater.

Out of the corner of my eye I can just see Tom Bigelow as he stands talking with the bookkeeper inside the bank. And by this time, if no unforeseen difficulty has arisen, I know that Johnny Meany is in the vault making a quick but judicious selection of the cash and securities which we can most easily dispose of.

After what seemed an eternity, but was in reality only four or five minutes, I saw Bigelow come out of the bank and stroll leisurely up the street. This was the signal that the money had been secured and that Meany was making his escape in the opposite direction.

Now everything depended on my holding the cashier just as much longer as I could. Every minute he remained there talking with me meant that much delay in the discovery of the bank's loss and the starting of the police on our trail.

Another five minutes dragged along before I had exhausted the supply of questions which I wanted answered. Then I said good-bye, promising to return on the next day, and told my coachman to drive on. The cashier whom I had duped so successfully stood there on the sidewalk bowing and smiling as my carriage rolled down the street.

I went to the house of a friend where I exchanged my disguise for my ordinary clothes. Then I boarded a train for Montreal and there a few days later Bigelow and Meany divided with me booty amounting to \$40,000.

It was nothing unusual for the clever bands of "bank sneaks" with which I "worked," to steal as much or more than that in as short order. But, as I have told you, a relentless curse followed our dishonestly acquired wealth and sooner or later taught those who would learn the lesson that honesty is the only policy and that CRIME DOES NOT PAY.

SOPHIE LYONS.

The Deadly Perils of Being Married in June

EVER since the institution of marriage the woman who is married in June has been looked upon as the luckiest of mortals—one on whose future the fates can hardly help smiling. "Happy as a June bride," "lucky as a June bride," and other familiar phrases express the almost universal belief that the woman who becomes a bride during the month of June is more certain of happiness than the woman who promises to love, honor, and perhaps obey, at some other time of the year.

But now comes science with the startling announcement that all this is mere superstition and that, far from being an auspicious month for matrimony, June is, with possibly one exception, quite the worst in the year.

It is the French Society for Social Reform which thus shatters all our illusions regarding the desirability of choosing a day in June for one's wedding. According to statistics recently submitted by this society to the Bertillon Bureau in Paris, men and women who marry in June are threatened by an appalling number of dangers which are entirely beyond the bounds of possibility in any other month except November.

Foremost among the perils which menace June brides and grooms, according to this authority, are the toxic fungi which flourish on rice during the late Spring and early Summer.

Newlyweds may be showered with rice at any other time of the year with impunity, but in June every grain that touches them carries the risk of infection and is liable to bring them the worst of misfortunes in the shape of a disagreeable disease.

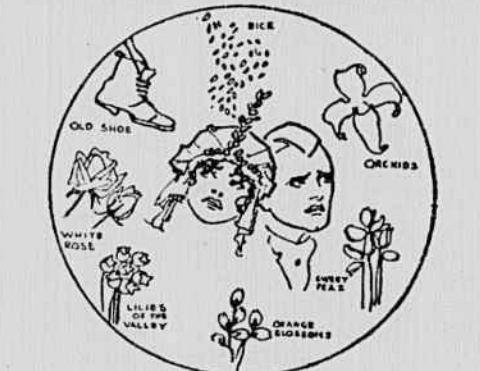
Although the mould or fungus which thrives on rice during June is by no means so mortal as such near-moulds as the tubercle bacilli or anthrax, it is capable of producing extremely unpleasant effects.

If it finds a lodging on the human body it poisons the entire system and causes torments sufficient to change the best natured men and women into grouchy, nagging individuals.

These French scientists declare that a large percentage of divorces, separations, desertions, jealous quarrels and affairs with affinites can be traced to the fact that the husbands and wives were married in June and that they became hopelessly infected from the rice with which their friends innocently showered them.

But disease-breeding rice is not the only cause for dread at a June wedding. Every blossom in the floral decorations conceals in its petals an equally serious menace.

Ivy poisoning may be contracted from



"Men and women who marry in June are threatened with an appalling number of dangers."

sweet pea vines. The most expensive orchids cause a troublesome variety of itch. The pollen from white roses produces rose colds and American Beauties are no more desirable, for their heavy fragrance masks the germs of Spring fever. Lilies of the valley may give you ringworm. Even the orange blossoms which wreath

the bride's hair may make her a victim to the awful torments of neuralgia.

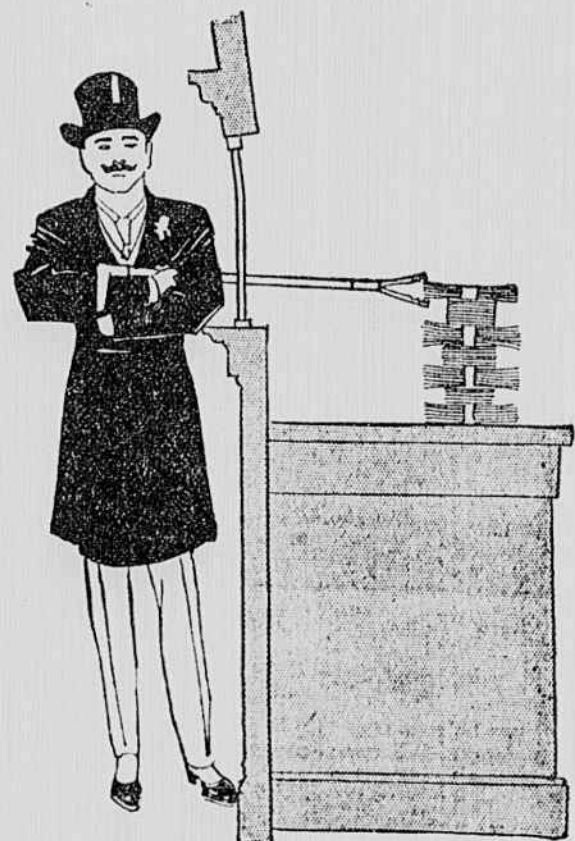
And if you escape all these floral perils there still remains the danger of contracting from the blossoms pityriasis rosea—a disease which manifests itself in the most painful burning and itching all over the body.

Even the old shoes which dangle from the bridal couple's carriage or clatter on their carriage roof hold a special danger in the shape of the germs which produce the dread seven-year itch.

Included in this damaging attack upon early Summer marriages, there is an analysis of the great number of suicides among those who were married in the month of roses. A tabulated list of poisons and other methods used by husbands and wives bent upon self-destruction is given with suggestions as to their prevention.

Finally there is a possible explanation offered why imbeciles, epileptics, alcoholics, paralytics, and others mentally unfit have a tendency to turn their thoughts of love to marriage in June. It would seem according to this analysis that certain bodily functions in this class of incapables are in abeyance to some extent during the Winter months. As soon as the Spring thaw occurs, these persons begin to go outdoors, and as a consequence their diseases become more active and aggressive, and they are stirred to imitate the brute world of birds and beasts, and seek their mates.

While healthy individuals subordinate this mating instinct to convenience of time and money, those whose mental activity approaches more nearly the lower animals cannot resist the same appeal that makes a bird build its nest or a bear its cave in the early Summer. Therefore, June marriages are almost certain to have a large number of those who are mentally below par among them.



"Walter Sheridan was the first of the bank thieves to conceal a pair of tweezers in the end of his cane and use them to pick up bundles of money which were beyond the reach of his arms."